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CHAPTER NINE

Ann Radcliffe's Journey Made in the Summer of 1794: *obliterated womanhood in a travelogue context*

Magdalena Ożarska

In 1795, Ann Radcliffe published her *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: to Which are Added Some Observations During a Tour of the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland*. The book received enthusiastic reviews shortly afterwards, as the author was hailed 'a genuine copyist' who had elegantly achieved the effects of 'pathetic scenes, or wonderful events' (*The Critical Review* 1795). *The Analytical Review* (1795), however, stressed that the text, although dotted with some landscape descriptions that certainly deserved the praise lavished on them, was not remarkably original elsewhere.

Expectedly, Radcliffe's travelogue has been investigated for its Gothic aesthetics, which researchers typically seek to locate in any work of hers. Yet the *Journey* is interesting for other reasons. In this chapter I wish to look at the constructions of femininity that it communicates and juxtapose them with those of Mary Wollstonecraft, whose 1795 *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (frequently referred to as *Scandinavian Letters*)

was published in 1796. Because of their contemporaneity, these two texts appear to provide an appropriate backdrop for each other. Other than that, it might also be helpful to take a brief look at a travelogue by another woman writer who visited the same part of Europe as Radcliffe did, published in the same decade. For that purpose, the 1798 *Journal of a Visit to Hamburgh and of the Journey from Hamburgh to Goslar* (known under the joint title of *The Hamburgh Journal*) by Dorothy Wordsworth seems to be a good choice.[1]

Before embarking on a discussion of Ann Radcliffe's book, a concise definition of travel literature would also be appropriate at this juncture. It is generally agreed that 'the genre subsumes works of exploration and adventure as well as guides and accounts of sojourns in foreign lands' (Cuddon 1991: 995), so there is no doubt that Radcliffe's *Journey* clearly falls into the category.[2] In his seminal study, Charles Batten offers a survey of major eighteenth-century travel narrative conventions. First and foremost, Batten tells us, the neoclassical travel account was expected to be impersonal, and preferably modelled upon Joseph Addison's 1705 *Remarks on Italy.* Importantly, Addison's text set travel-writing standards for several decades to come, and even domestic tour writers, including Daniel Defoe in his 1724-1726 *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, imitated his impersonal and factual depictions. The traveller's task was tough as s/he had to prove that s/he had seen the places described, but that objective was to be accomplished in an impersonal manner. Needless to say, any inelegant discussion of practicalities such as food, lodgings or prices was to be avoided. It was not until 1779, as George Parks has it, that 'the new mode for including emotional passages in accounts of journeys in Europe was fully accepted' (Parks 1964: 32), and the hitherto binding conventions gradually began to abate. Only in the nineteenth century did anecdotes enlivening matter-of-fact reports come to be encouraged and appreciated. In addition, having a plot to follow was not laudable either, as it appeared to detract from the documentary function of the text. So did a chatty or colloquial narrative tone. On the contrary, throughout the eighteenth century, the use of a modest, unadorned style was taken as proof of the writer's credibility (Batten 1978: 12-63).

At the end of the eighteenth century, when Arthur Young discussed two popular modes of travel writing – namely, diaries and letters – he voiced the opinion that diaries were the more credible (i.e. more readily verifiable) of the two. He claimed that if a traveller recorded superficial observations, the reader would recognise this as deception (Batten 1978: 15-33); thus he stressed the need for truly informative reports of individuated travel experience (Batten 1978: 76), and especially so in the case of female travel writers. Travelling was, as recent researchers frequently point out, a gendered experience. It is of course true that 'the dominant tradition in travel was […] palpably masculine […] and [that] the first explorers often refused to take women on board because they were believed to bring bad luck and to distract the men from their task' (Rojek and Urry 1997: 16). Even within the bounds of urban culture, while men could *flâneur* at will, women had to take the precautions of securing male 'protection' if they meant to venture into public space (see Buzard 1978; Moore 1992; Nord 1995; Rojek and Urry 1997).[3] No wonder then that writing women travellers had to approach their narratives in ways which reinforced their respectability. Advocates of *écriture féminine* would claim that this had to do with the sexual difference which necessarily translated into a separate language and manners of perceiving the world. If that view is accepted, John Barrell may be right in voicing the claim that women's language was 'relatively concrete and pictogrammatic as compared with that of educated men' (qtd. in Labbe 1998: 12).

Despite the prevalent eighteenth-century atmosphere surrounding female writing practices, which was hardly conducive to sustained literary effort, with women typically adopting apologetic stances to promote their literary activities (Gilbert and Gubar 1980: 63), female writers were not immune to the rapidly growing tendency of the age to produce travel accounts. This travel writing urge was not overtly ridiculed until 1826, when Anna Jameson had her mocking *Diary of an Ennuyée* published, and in the meantime the general view was that 'the Continental tour [was] an affair of "writing" more than of "reality"' (Buzard 1993: 156). This becomes conspicuous when the numbers of travel narratives by women published before and after 1770 are compared: 'Only two […] appear before 1770

— the most notable of these being Mary Wortley Montagu's *Embassy Letters* (1763) — but between 1770 and 1800 some twenty female-authored travelogues appear' (Thompson 2005: 33-4). Female 'anti-tourists' (a term of James Buzard's) were rebuked for travelling solely for the purpose of producing their memoirs (Buzard 1993: 158). This criticism closely connects to the above-outlined circumstances: if, as Mary Poovey claims, eighteenth-century 'proper ladies' were supposed to manifest their modesty through keeping quiet in company (see Tilli Olsen's notion of unnatural female 'silences'), they desperately sought a respectable way of compensating for that silence. This was their use of ink and paper (with no intention of publication, of course, if their respectability was to be preserved – just what the age termed 'amusement' for a close-knit group of family friends) (Poovey 1985: 41ff). Yet, being a published writer already, Ann Radcliffe could afford to disregard at least some of these limitations.

If Mary Wollstonecraft's, Dorothy Wordsworth's and Ann Radcliffe's travelogues were to be graded according to the intensity of their feminine element, then Wordsworth's would come across as the most conventionally feminine (petty-minded and unassuming) work of a female tourist; Wollstonecraft's would be placed somewhere in the middle with her offended feminine sentiments and capacity to act manly; while the far end of the spectrum, given the almost completely obliterated femininity of its narrator, would be occupied by Ann Radcliffe in her *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794.*

One can easily demonstrate that Mary Wollstonecraft's *Scandinavian Letters* are women-centred and women-oriented. Threatened by the possibility of being abandoned by Gilbert Imlay, her lover and the father of her illegitimate child, Wollstonecraft sets out to explore Scandinavian countries on a business mission to promote his interests, accompanied only by her infant daughter and a timid French maid. The text is of interest not only for its informational value, but also for the cultural constructs that it communicates. Rather than assuming an impersonal mode and addressing her work to readers of conventional expectations, i.e. Addison's model readers, Wollstonecraft chooses to challenge the still

popular standards and produces a personalised travel account, in a book which – like Radcliffe's – was intended and written for publication.

Wollstonecraft's sensitivity to the plight of women has been stressed by several critics who love to dwell on chosen passages, like the celebrated one in which the narrator reflects on her baby daughter's future in the following words: 'Hapless woman! what a fate is thine!' (Wollstonecraft 2003: 97). The author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft is conspicuously concerned with the social condition of women in her day. Her *Scandinavian Letters* are neither private nor familiar – despite the assumed guise (Favret 2004: 109-10). Indeed, one of the most frequently cited passages in Wollstonecraft's *Scandinavian Letters* is the one wherein a local man compliments her on asking '*men's questions*' which leads him to believe that she is 'a woman of observation' (Wollstonecraft 1987: 68; italics in the original). The narrator records this compliment with obvious relish. After all, in those days, 'respectable women who wished to explore and travel were often forced to adopt the character armour of the male' (Rojek and Urry 1997: 16); so her protection seems complete and successful. When the narrator remarks that 'a woman coming alone interested them' (Wollstonecraft 1987: 96), she explores the reasons for the locals' 'interest': was it her 'look of peculiar delicacy' (Wollstonecraft 1987: 96) or 'the sympathy I inspired' (Wollstonecraft 1987: 97), she wonders.

In contrast, it has been noted that Dorothy Wordsworth 'in her earliest German journal appears as a fairly conventional tourist, comparing the shops, houses, and food of foreign cities to those of her own country' (Levin 1987: 74). The domestic concerns that are a distinguishing quality of Dorothy's travel writing,' symptomatic of 'the feminine origins of the work' (Levin 1987: 80), are absent from her travel journal. She chooses not to mention any sights whatsoever, or make any general observations about the customs of German people, concentrating instead on isolated incidents she witnessed in the streets or while dealing with the locals in everyday situations. The *Hamburgh Journal* lacks a wider perspective. We learn that she and her brother William travel, but there seems to be no purpose to their journey; we learn how much a breakfast costs, but no information

follows as to what is done after the meal is finished. As for descriptions, the diarist includes occasional statements of a general nature, such as 'The country becomes occasionally rather interesting for its strangeness' (Wordsworth 1995: 33), followed by a reference to barren land, woods and few cattle, the description being thus exhausted. Nature abroad does not seem to inspire much interest or involvement by Dorothy's narrator. Perhaps her expectations were not so much related to the sights to be seen, as to the natural beauty to be experienced. When that is found lacking, the whole journal fails in its basic function and has to be filled with petty trivialities concerning food prices and hats. In a sense, although the narrator comes across as an extravert and reports on what she sees as the trip progresses, the initial assumption she communicates between the lines is somewhat different: it is to be an inward journey into the past, undisturbed by intense experiences. When they travel on the river Elbe, she almost enjoys 'the gentle breeze and the gentle motion!' (Wordsworth 1995: 19) and when tea is served onboard, by moonlight, she says, 'I enjoyed solitude and quietness, and many a recollected pleasure' (Wordsworth 1995: 19). Dorothy's real pleasures belong in the past; the present is not to be searched for intense aesthetic or interpersonal experiences: a mere hint at the diarist's dissatisfaction with her present journey. Instead, it is enough to concentrate on the past so as not to face the unpleasant reality. 'The many tongues that gabbled in the cabin' (Wordsworth 1995: 19) are sufficient to disturb the narrator's complacency as they seem to remind her of the trip itself, which does not promise pleasures that could compare with that of the past.

With her eye for insignificant detail and her ear her colloquial speech, Dorothy's narrator makes a clear departure from male-instituted travel-writing rules. The *Hamburgh Journal* focuses on subjects of interest to women: their status, appearances, households, habits and fashions. Dorothy the traveller is a spirited and indefatigable observer of foreign lifestyles and manners, mainly inasmuch as they pertain to females. In her travel account, descriptions of food, drink, general household management, prices of victuals, dealings with servants, accommodation standards, and cleanliness or lack of it, abound. Naturally, references like

these can be expected to appeal principally to female readers, and it is unlikely that the author – if she ever intend to publish – was not aware of that. Some critics, however, perceive it as a debasement of Dorothy Wordsworth's artistic powers: 'what she sees in Germany makes her appear provincial and narrow-minded, which of course Dorothy was. In her *Grasmere Journal* she would write about home as no one she had read had done before, imbuing the domestic with a sense of the sublime, but away from home Dorothy's journals were the work of the middle-class evangelical she had been raised to be. The perfect electrometer has become a recorder of small change and foul stenches, the lone nightingale has joined the chorus of Englishwomen everywhere' (Wilson 2009: 91).

Ann Radcliffe made her journey to Continental Europe in the summer of 1794 thanks to the proceeds from the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in May 1794. As is the case with a large majority of female-authored texts of the time, the *Journey* is preceded by a short preface, which contains Radcliffe's take on the modesty topos. While she vigorously disclaims any intention to present an apology, she nevertheless explains that her trip was undertaken 'in the company of her nearest relative and friend' (J v), i.e. her husband, William Radcliffe, a political journalist and translator of foreign travelogues into English (Turner 2001: 215), and the then editor of the *English Chronicle.* She also declares that all the passages concerning economics or politics are of his authorship: 'less her own than elsewhere' (J v). For that reason, the reader is led to believe that, had it not been for William's protestations that two authors' names on the front page would be distracting, she would have happily included his name alongside her own (J v). But, as things stand, the front page only bears the usual 'By Ann Radcliffe.' This authorial attribution seems misleading to the contemporary reader, to say the least.

As already indicated, one of the most striking features of Radcliffe's travelogue is the unfemininity of her discourse. Some researchers (Bohls 1999: 69ff; Kinsley 2008: 105ff) appear to have overlooked it n claiming that Radcliffe offers 'an embodied and feminine alternative to the disinterested male spectator theorised by Addison, Hume,' and others (DeLucia 2014: 138). Yet, arguably, the

author intended the structure of her book to be quite different. Drawing on the authority of Dr. Johnson, Radcliffe quotes an extended passage from his *Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775): 'These diminutive observations seem to take away something from the dignity of writing, and therefore are never communicated but with hesitation, and a little fear of abasement and contempt' (J 103). She then goes on to criticise contemporary travel writers, who are keen to demonstrate that their journeys took them through places which are interesting and merit description. This attitude Radcliffe likens to 'people in a promenade [who] always smile, and always look around to observe whether they are seen smiling' (J 104). The implication for her own travel writing is purposefully to refrain from detailed descriptions of the sights visited, not to mention the routinely reported 'customs and manners' of foreign nations. Because detailed descriptive accounts, as has been said, typically feature in the majority of contemporary travelogues, their conspicuous absence, or radical reduction, may be said to constitute a distinctive feature of the Radcliffean travel discourse. What is peculiar, however, is that this passage of implicit metadiscourse is inserted around page 100 of the whole, rather than at the beginning: perhaps Radcliffe did not reflect on the justification behind her authorial choices at the start.

As one reads the five hundred pages of Radcliffe's *Journey*, the gender of the narrator seems hardly discernible and; in fact, most of the text has a definitely masculine ring to it. The travelogue, which resembles essays rather than a journal or a set of letters (no dates, no addressees – apart from the occasional unidentified 'you,' with bare place names for intertitles), appears to be mainly preoccupied with those very topics that the writer herself labels as 'less than her own' in the prefatory note. These include repeated discussions of local taxes, customs duties, the particulars of foreign government systems, commerce, military history or recent war operations in Europe, and the like – all eloquently and competently presented. As Turner aptly puts it, 'Radcliffe does not avail herself of the travelogue's scope for immediacy or intimacy; she does, however, supply her reader with several passages of the sublime natural description which had become the trademark of her fiction' (Turner 2001: 215). Yet even those tend to be sparse,

which may lead an inquisitive reader to believe that the passages written by Radcliffe herself, or those containing her own observations rather than those of her husband, are indeed few. It is only a couple of times that the narrator remarks on the details of local women's dress or headwear (J 8, 40, 51, 72, 91, 156), sympathises with child beggars (J 85, 142) or peoples a romantic-looking parsonage with an imaginary family (J 402). Rarely does she resort to the rather unremarkable housewifely mode to dwell on the prices of local transportation (J 77, 84), its cleanliness or lack thereof (J 217), or the quality and prices of food in the countries visited (J 68, 79, 93, 131, 156, 268). Extended authoritative discussions of local wines, in turn, appear more likely to have been penned, or delivered, by Mr. Radcliffe.

Other than the above, it is indeed rare for the narrator of *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* to hint at her gender identity however subtly. There is no doubt that the text is largely impersonal, and this impersonality is dispelled only a few times. An admirer of a number of long-eighteenth-century celebrities, including Dr. Johnson (1709-1784), the painter Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and the poet William Collins (1721-1759), Radcliffe quotes a couple of passages from the latter's *Ode to Evening*. One such moment is preceded by the sentence: 'It was a fine evening in June' (J 88). Surely, phrases like this cannot be convincingly attributed to Mr. Radcliffe. The section which most conspicuously suggests that the *Journey*'s narrator is female is inserted shortly after the already discussed quotation from Dr. Johnson. It concerns a Clarissine convent located near the travellers' inn in Cologne, and the very strict rule of the order of Poor Clares. To Protestant travellers to the Continent, Roman Catholic pieties commonly seem exaggerated and are typically represented as absurd, but Radcliffe goes a step beyond this convention. Her travelogue narrator seems hardly capable of restraining her emotions and refraining from the first person as she pities the victimhood of these nuns and their relatives:

> And, lest some lingering remains of filial affection should tempt an unhappy nun to lift the veil of separation between herself and her mother, she is not allowed to speak even with her, but in the presence of an abbess. Accounts

> of such horrible perversions of human reason make the blood thrill and the teeth chatter. Their fathers they can never speak to […]. It is not easily that a cautious mind becomes convinced of the existence of such severe orders; when it does, astonishment at the artificial miseries, which the ingenuity of human beings forms for themselves by seclusion, is as boundless as at the other miseries, with which the most trivial vanity and envy so frequently pollute the intercourses of social life. The poor nuns, thus nearly entombed during their lives, are, after death, tied upon a board in the clothes they die in, and, with only their veils thrown over the face, are buried in the garden of the convent. (J 109-10)

On most occasions, Ann Radcliffe's femininity is subsumed in the plural 'we,' i.e. 'the plural term' (J v), which, as she elucidates in her preface, is intended to represent both of the Radcliffes. To me, this emphasises their co-operation when writing the travelogue. It may be interesting to note (see Colbert 2005: 15-9) that similar collaborations were rare before the Romantic period: the only travel account authored jointly by a married couple was John and Mary Ann Parker's 1795 *A Voyage round the World, in the Gorgon Man of War. Performed and Written by Captain John Parker, His Widow, for the Advantage of a Numerous Family*. Although in the case of Radcliffe's *Journey* it may not be completely clear who produced the actual manuscript, there is little doubt that the final product resulted from many long conversations between the spouses and for that reason cannot be attributed to Ann Radcliffe exclusively.

Her contribution, more often than not, is the transparency – if not obliteration – of her femininity: a distinguishing feature of the *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794.* Besides that, the book remains rather conventional – with its topoi of Protestant morality and devotion as superior to Roman Catholicism, standard expressions of attachment to the author's home country and the ultimate 'grateful sense of homecoming' (see Turner 2001: 218). The final sentence of the *Journey* reads: 'Thither we returned and concluded a tour, which had afforded infinite delight in the grandeur of its landscapes and a reconciling view of human nature in the simplicity, integrity, and friendly disposition of the inhabitants' (J 499). Very true, except that the latter aspect is hardly ever mentioned over the five hundred or so pages.

In conclusion and to paraphrase Margaret Cavendish with her 1656 *True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life*, one is tempted to ask: Why hath this lady writ her five-hundred-page book? Perhaps the answer is the same as it was a century and a half before to Cavendish: 'Neither did I intend this piece for to delight, but to divulge; not to please the fancy, but to tell the truth, lest after-ages should mistake' (Cavendish 1886: 318). If this be the case with Ann Radcliffe's *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: to Which are Added Some Observations During a Tour of the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland*, it makes sense to assume that her travel book testifies to a certain lack of interest in the womanly aspect of travelling on the part of the author of *Udolpho*, and perhaps conscious desire not perpetuate the kind of discourse featured in contemporary women's travelogues. Yet, unlike Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe does not proudly expect to be received like male travellers: she is journeying with her husband, which allows her to adopt the comfortable attitude of a distinguished man's wife, without having to prove her ability to ask 'men's questions,' for example. Her status on this score is conventional and cannot be compared to the feminine insecurities of Dorothy Wordsworth, who – travelling with a male companion as she is – is not considered a respectable woman, but one whose morality may be suspect: she may possibly be a mistress accompanying her lover and only posing as his sister. Radcliffe's position when on the Continental tour is unquestionably respectable, and there is no need for her to assert her femininity in any way to ensure that her individuality is duly recognised and her respectability maintained. This is perhaps why the title of her travelogue is <u>A</u> *Journey* – one of many of its kind, and one that in certain ways is and is not very typical.

Notes

1 For detailed discussions of Dorothy Wordsworth's and Mary Wollstonecraft's travelogues, see my papers: 'Dorothy Wordsworth as Travel Writer: the 1798 *Hamburgh Journal*' (2010) and 'Mary Wollstonecraft as Narrator of *Scandinavian Letters* and Private Correspondence' (2013).

2 However, according to the editors of *Travel Writing 1700-1830*, there are several problems with defining the genre: 'We think of it as having a narrative core, the story of a journey, yet eighteenth-century travel writing often includes as much impersonal description as first-person narration' (Eger et al. 2001: xx). Another problem is the writers' including elements of fiction and untruth, which in turn prevents one from viewing travel writing as documentary or non-fictional (Eger et al. 2001: xxi). All these aspects have contributed to the frequent dismissal of travel narratives as 'overtly autobiographical forms of journals, diaries, or letters' (Eger et al. 2001: xxiv). Notwithstanding the above, popular in its day, travel writing was read and appreciated by 'all class of readers' (Eger et al. 2001: xxvii) and its influence on contemporary culture is not to be underestimated.

3 This situation was to last well into the 1860s, when Thomas Cook and his organised tour company provided adequate chaperoning to lady travellers, as several letters of thanks sent by satisfied lady customers testify (Buzard 1993: 149).

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